

Christian Orient

ISSN 0258 - 1744

March

1998

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ECCLESIOLOGY

EDITORIAL

CHURCH AS HAVEN AND REFUGE A SYRIAC INTERPRETATION

Dr. Sophy Rose C.M.C.

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

Dr. G. Chediath

EAST AS THE HOMELAND OF ICONOLOGY AND
ICONOGRAPHY: AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Dr. Joseph Kallarangatt

BOOK REVIEWS, NEWS

Vol. XIX

No.1

CHRISTIAN ORIENT

An Indian Journal of Eastern Churches for Creative
Theological Thinking

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March

Vol. XIX

No. 1

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Manuscripts and Book Reviews are to be sent to the **Managing Editor, Christian Orient Trust, Manganam P. O., Kottayam - 686 018, Kerala, India.**

Annual Subscription: Rs. 45/-; Foreign: \$ 30/- or DM 50 by air mail; \$ 15/- or DM 30 sea mail.

Single Copy: Rs. 15 (in India); \$ 10 or the equivalent (abroad).

Editorial

In the Apostolic Constitution "Sacri canones" which introduced the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium" (CCEO) on 18 October 1990, Pope John Paul II declared that it has been the firm position of the Holy See of Rome to have two separate codes of Canon Law for the Latin and Eastern Churches.

"From the beginning of the codification of the canons of the Eastern Churches there was the firm will of the Roman Pontiffs for the promulgation of two codes: one for the Latin Church, the other for the Eastern Catholic Churches. This would clearly show the observance of that which results in the Church by God's Providence - that the Church itself, gathered in the one Spirit breathes as though with two lungs - of the East and of the West - and that it burns with the love of Christ in one heart having two ventricles" (John Paul II, Apost. Const., AAS 82, (1990), 1037).

The lungs are inevitable for life. Similarly the eastern and western heritages of the Church are inevitable and integral parts of the divinely revealed undivided heritage of the universal Church.

"for distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity they are bright with that tradition which was handed down from the apostles through the Fathers, and which forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the Universal Church" (OE I).

But because of the various vicissitudes of history there were cases of alienation between eastern and western Churches. Ecclesial communion should never lead to servile imitation of the tradition of one Church by another. Nor does it mean the domination of the more powerful Church by imposing its traditions over the others. Ecclesial identity and communion are not artificially created from outside. They are to emerge from within by living the authentic form ecclesial life remaining faithful to its own venerable heritage.

An adequate awareness of the identity of the Churches is to be kept alive through proper ecclesial formation. The sacrament of Holy Orders is the public, official and sacramental authorization of its ministers by the Church to be at the service of the ecclesial community. The ministers have to be authentic witnesses of

faith and faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. But if the leaders are not properly rooted in their own authentic ecclesial heritage the community will be impoverished and lose its heritage and identity.

This issue of Christian Orient is intended to open up further the theological horizons to some of the important aspects of the Eastern Churches. The common division of the Church into eastern and western cannot be equally applicable to all the Churches on the basis of the Roman Empire. The Latin west and Greek East existed within the Roman Empire where the Church had become its official religion by the fourth century. Caesaro-papism prevailed within the imperial set up. On the other hand the Church of the East in the Persian Empire and the Church of the Thomas Christians of India did not form part of this imperial set up of the Roman Empire. Hence their ecclesiological and spiritual heritage deserve our special attention. It becomes all the more important in this historical context where the Vatican Council II was convened "to shake off the dust of the Empire" from the Church! Sr. Dr. Sophy Rose analysis the nature of the Church as haven as expressed in the Liturgy of the Hours of the Church of the East. Dr. K. Kallarangattu invites our attention to the iconology of the Semitic tradition. Icons are not mere formal or natural representations. There is a rich ecclesial reality behind it. The mind and faith of the Church are being expressed through the icons. Symbolism reigns supreme in iconology. Dr. Geevarghese Chediath analysis the actual Indian situation and brings to our attention the cases of injustice which prevail in the inter-Church relations in India. The denial of the right for evangelization and pastoral care is an explicit violation of the fundamental rights of the Church. Every Church has got the God-given right for evangelization and pastoral care by remaining faithful to its own ecclesial heritage. I am grateful to the authors for their contributions.

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Church as Haven and Refuge

A Syriac Interpretation

To understand the 'why' of the Church in its original design is a delighting concern for the ecclesiologists. Basing on the sources of faith - Scripture and Tradition - we have many sided opinions and teachings regarding the question. Here we have the contribution of the East Syriac liturgical sources that convey their insights through symbols and images. Use of symbolic language as a mode of theological reflection is one of the main characteristics of Syriac theology. In the following pages, we consider two of the important images, which provide certain clues to the very nature of the Church and its 'why' of existence on earth. They are *haven* and *refuge*.

1. Church as Haven (*Le'mana*)

1. Origin of the Metaphor

The imagery of haven or the coming to the haven / harbour is frequently occurring symbolism in the East - Syriac liturgical prayers. It is an imagery closely related to ship (*el'pa*) but with wider and deeper meaning. This metaphor has

allusions in the Bible¹, in Greek classical tradition and in the Judaeo - Christian tradition but not without Hellenistic influence.² In the NT, there is a mention of a "fair harbour" in Acts 27:8. But it is very rarely used by the Fathers and in the liturgy. The biblical text that inspired the early Fathers to develop this imagery is Ps. 107:28-30 in which we read: "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress he made the storm be still and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because they had quiet, and he brought them to their desired *haven*".

According to P. Lundberg,³ there is a striking parallelism between this imagery in the Manichaean psalms in which Christ is called "haven of my trust", "haven of life" and "haven of light"⁴ and that of the Christian tradition. Such a typology could possibly be derived from the Iranian gnosis or the Greco - Syrian gnosis; in fact, perhaps, from both of them through some leit-motives of Judaeo-

1 Gen. 49:13; Ps. 107:30; Is. 23:1.

2 E. R. Hambye, "The Symbol of the Coming to the Harbour" OCA 197 (Rome: 1974) 410.

3 P. Lundberg, *La Typologie Baptismale dans l'ancienne Eglise* (Leipzig-Upsala: 1942) 74-85.

4 Cfr. R. Murray, *The Symbols of the Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London: 1975) 251.

Christian theology.⁵ Whatever be the origin of this metaphor, its wide use in the Syrian-Christian tradition, especially in the liturgical tradition, is something to be particularly mentioned.

2. Haven: Various Meanings

The symbolic usage of haven in the Syriac tradition has different shades of meaning. Generally speaking the expression 'Church as haven' contains a soteriological and an eschatological meaning.⁶ The metaphor is also applied to Christ⁷ and to Virgin Mary.⁸ In the *Hymn on Nativity* St. Ephrem writes as if Mary is saying:

I became a haven for your sake,
great sea
Behold the Psalms of your father David

and also the words of the prophets,
like
ships discharged in me Your great
wealth⁹

Moreover, it is applied to baptism,¹⁰ to the Church,¹¹ to Christ's Resurrection,¹² to the mysteries of the Eucharist,¹³ to the sacraments and even to the saints.¹⁴ Also the *Teshbohta* attributed to Narsai speaks of Christ's advent as the harbour for priests, kings and prophets.¹⁵ In the *Odes of Solomon*,¹⁶ the Odist speaks of himself as transported by the Truth as in a Chariot" which after various perils by land and sea became for him a haven of salvation.

5 E. R. Hambye, "The Symbol....", 410.

6 E. R. Hambye, "The Symbol.....", 404-405.

7 P. Bedjan (ed), *Breviarium juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum* Vol. II (Paris: 1887) 151.

8 P. Bedjan *Breviarium*, Vol. II, 93.

9 *Hymns on Nativity* IX, 4. What the author meant is that Mary is the harbour into which the OT types come to rest as ships. To say more concretely, the promises given to David and the prophets are fulfilled in Jesus born of Mary. Cfr. K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns* (New York: 1989) 124.

10 *Onitha de Raze*, II Sunday of *Danha*, in *Supplementum Mysteriorum sive Proprium Missarum de Tempore et de Sanctis juxta Ritum Ecclesiae Syro Malabarensis* (Rome: 1960) 25.

11 *Onitha de Qanke*, I Sunday of the Dedication of the Church, *Supplementum*, 155.

12 *Onitha de Raze* for Monday in Easter week.

13 *Onitha de Raze* IV Sunday of the Dedication of the Church, *Supplementum*.161.

14 E. R. Hambye, "The Symbol.....", 405.

15 Conybeare-Maclean, *Rituale Armenorum* (Oxford: 1905) 335, 383.

16 J. H. Charlesworth (ed. & tr.), *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford: 1977). For an ecclesiological understanding of the book, see, J. Kallarangatt, "Ecclesiological Implications of the Odes of Solomon" in *Christian Orient* XVIII (1997) 28-39.

I went up into the light of Truth
 as into a chariot
 and the Truth led me and caused
 me to come.
 And caused me to pass over chasms
 and gulfs
 and saved me from cliffs and valleys.
 And became for me a haven of
 salvation
 and set me on the place of immortal
 life.¹⁷

Though there are various meanings as mentioned above, here our concern is limited to the expression 'Church as haven'. But, if we want to speak of the Church as haven, we must first of all consider the theo-christic basis of this imagery, since it is God who made her the haven. The early Syriac literature as well as the liturgical prayers bring out this in a substantial manner.

a. Christ as Haven

The *Acts of Judas Thomas*, one of the early Syriac writings, presents Christ as the haven, more precisely, the haven for those who accept baptism in a 'sea of trouble'. "Believe and trust in our Lord Jesus the Messiah, Him, whom we preach in order that your hope may be in Him, and that in Him ye may live for ever and ever, and that He may be to you a guide in the land of error and may be to you a haven in the sea of trouble and may be to you a fountain

of living water....".¹⁸ Again we read in the context of a prayer addressed to the Son of Perfect Mercy by Judas Thomas, the same theme: "Judas began to pray and to speak thus: 'Companion and help of the feeble, hope and confidence of the poor...voice that came from on high, comforting the hearts of thy believers; resort and haven of those that go forth into the region of darkness...'"¹⁹ Aphrahat shows knowledge on the tradition without giving the full picture. In *Demonstration XIV* he combines the ideas of land and sea travel to call Christ both 'way' and 'haven'. "He is the strait and narrow Way; Let us journey in his footsteps that we may arrive at the haven".²⁰ In one of the portions of the East-Syriac liturgical prayers, the *Emmanuel* is seen as the harbour: "Praise to the creator and hope to the mortals proclaimed the spiritual ones; henceforth there is reconciliation and the occasion for sin ceases: and the course of prophecy comes to rest at the "harbour of Emmanuel" which is interpreted with us our God".²¹

b. Church as Haven (*Lemena*)

In the liturgical prayers, the Church is presented as the haven with different shades of meaning.

i) Church: a Haven of Peace (*Lemena de Shelama*)

Here below are some of the important portions of sections that convey

¹⁷ Ode 38:1-6.

¹⁸ A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, Commentary* <Supplements to Novum Testamentum Vol. V> (Leiden: 1962) Act III. 36. P. 84.

¹⁹ Act XIII, 156.; A. F. J. Klijn, *The Act of Thomas*, 148.

²⁰ Dem. XIV, 684. 4-5. Cfr. R. Murray, *Symbols*....., 165.

²¹ P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. 1, 329.

certain significant aspects of Church's very existence in the world. First of all, she is the 'haven of peace'. Only when we grasp the theological significance of 'peace',²² we will be able to comprehend the gravity of this image.²³ See, what the liturgical prayer says:

A harbour of peace, O Christ you have established on earth for your praisers on the type of your celestial settlement and while sitting at the right of your heavenly Father, you have permeated your Church O King of glory with the quality and beauty of your cross...we beseech you a mighty wall to her and keep for her enduring peace.²⁴

Our Lord made a harbour of peace and a haven of expiation for those who are tormented.²⁵

Consecrate this for us...which we have built for the honour of your

name on which is donated your body and blood that may be a harbour and place of refuge for those who are persecuted....²⁶

Make O Lord, the strength set apart for your honour and let it be a harbour of helps to all those who are oppressed and distressed.²⁷

The son of Amram (Moses) set up a tabernacle of ten curtains in his camp to be a haven for the sinners who take refuge in it that they might obtain helps.²⁸

As we have just mentioned above, the Church as the haven of peace is one of the most important expressions concerning Church. According to biblical revelation, peace is the gift of God (Gal. 5:22) and Christ himself is our peace (Eph. 2:14). However, the peace is the result of the redemptive act of Christ.²⁹ It is the sumtotal

- 22 There are different Syriac terms to denote the concept peace and they are: *s^elama*, *saina* and *salia*. The equivalent Hebrew term is *Shalom* and the Greek is *eirene*.
- 23 J. L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Bangalore: 1983) 651-652. The Hebrew word *Shalom* means 'be complete'. It denotes a condition in which nothing is lacking. The rich content of this word cannot be rendered by a single word 'peace', says the McKenzie.
- 24 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 395. Cfr. Guillaume de Vries, "*Le Sens Ecclesial Hors De l'Eglise Catholique*" *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, IV (Paris: 1960) Col. 438.
- 25 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 403.
- 26 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 401.
- 27 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 426.
- 28 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 395.
- 29 Cfr. Eph. 2: 11ff. For details, Cfr. C. Delahanty, "Peace and Covenant" *Worship* 39 (1965) 106-109. Here the author illustrates that just as the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 15:15) and to Moses (Ex. 29:28) extended through them to the Hebrew nation and indeed to the whole world (Gen. 26:4) so also the peace in Christ is communal.

of the rescuing act of Christ. Consequently, it is intimately related to the gratuitous grace and love of God. It is His grace and love that liberated us from our sins, reconciled us with the Father,³⁰ declared us as righteous,³¹ elevated us as children of God and made us in communion with Him. In short, we are saved; we are in peace. Today we experience this saving experience of God in the Church especially through the sacraments. The Church is therefore not simply a means of peace but rather the abode of peace. Hence, when we say Church is a haven of peace, it hints at the truth that the Church is the secure place of salvation and those who come to this haven will experience the God-given gift of peace. If so, Peace is "the Church of tranquility and rest in which He established those whom He loosed from sins...".³² What is manifested here is the truth that the very existence of the Church is salvific.

ii. Church: a Heavenly Haven on Earth

Again, the Church is a haven founded on earth as the type of Christ's heavenly habitation.³³ In other words, though Church is established on earth,

its foundation, fashion and final destination etc. are heavenly. That is to say, the Church is a divine reality instituted by the divine act of Christ more specifically by the divine and sublime activity of the Holy Trinity. Since it is said: "A haven of peace O Christ you have established on earth...on account of this the angels and men rejoice in her consecration whose foundation the Father had laid and whom the Son has perfected and built and whom the Spirit came down and sanctified".³⁴

The Church is however a haven for the sinners,³⁵ a refuge of atonement for those who are afflicted,³⁶ oppressed and distressed³⁷ and for all those who trust in the Lord.³⁸ It is within it (haven) that the people shall rest from the roaring sea of sins.³⁹ Taking into consideration all these specific functions we can trace further the salvific role of the Church as well as its earthly and human nature. To say more clearly, the Church is a means of salvation to all whoever may be they are and whatever may be their state of perfection. The Church is therefore on the one hand a holy, divine reality consisting of redeemed people who experience peace or the

30 G. O. Collins, "Our Peace and Reconciliation" *The Way* XXII:2 (1982) 115ff.

31 Achtmeier, "Righteousness in the NT" in *IDB*, Vol. IV (New York: 1962) 94ff.

32 A. Voobus (trans), *Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac I, Chaps. I-X*, CSCO 402 <SS. 176> (Louvain: 1979) Chap. VII, p. 84.

33 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 395.

34 " " "

35 " " "

36 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 403.

37 " " " 426.

38 " " " 402, 406, 418, 436

39 " " " 393, 407, 415.

redemption; on the other hand it is an earthly, human reality consisting of sinful, impure, oppressed people who seek or rather who receive or get the experience of salvation in terms of rest, peace etc. in the Church. However, it is an open, universal reality meant for all especially for all those who need the help from God. That is why, the Lord has set apart a temple (a place for worship-Church) which is a symbol of the Church at large, as a haven of all helps to all those who are oppressed and distressed.⁴⁰ In this house of refuge and true hope the people or the worshippers experience the salvific power of God. "Christ has set up a place of refuge and of genuine hope for all those who are troubled. Be O Lord a bulwark for your adorers and safeguard them from the evil one. Heal and bind up their wounds in the mercy of your divinity, merciful and forgiving debts".⁴¹ In short, the Church is a haven of God's salvation and that is ultimately peace.

iii. Church: Haven of Ineffable Mysteries

We have come near to the haven of unutterable mysteries that we may receive and we may be made worthy to wash away impurity from ourselves and we may approach the spotless sacrifice and may be heirs of ever lasting and imperishable and

immortal life as Christ our king has promised to his friends and we may go towards the presence of our God with chants of praise and with thousands of Cherubims and ten thousands of Seraphims without stop, let us say Holy are You, honourable King of glory, have mercy on us."⁴²

When we say the Church as haven of ineffable mysteries, first of all we must know which are the mysteries that the Church carries. In the liturgical prayers we have many allusions that speak of the mysteries of the Church.⁴³ "O Our Saviour, in the mysteries and types which you have given her....she takes refuge and hope: the great book of your gospel, adorable wood of your cross, the beautiful image (*icon*) of your humanity. Great are the mysteries of her salvation".⁴⁴ "The medicine of life for our mortality Our Lord has given in his mysteries".⁴⁵ The Lord has given these mysteries-gospel, cross, humanity (incarnation of Christ), medicine of life (Eucharist)- to the Church as pledge and pardon for His children: "...Lord has made his glory to dwell in you and has given you his mysteries as a pledge".⁴⁶ "O holy Church, sing praise to your bridegroom....who has given you his mysteries as a sign and pardon for your children. He has pardoned and sanctified you in

40 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 426.

41 " " " 428, 430, 438, etc.

42 " " " 435, 441.

43 " " " 391, 407, 412, 419, 431, 434, 438, 440, 441 etc.

44 " " " 391.

45 " " " 440, 441.

46 " " " 431.

his grace from the blemish of the adversary".⁴⁷ From the above said passages it is evident that the mysteries that are given to the Church are meant ultimately for the remission of sins and sanctification of the believers, that is, for the salvation of the members of the Church. Hence, when we say that Church is a haven of adorable mysteries, with a specific salvific role in the world.

II. Church as House of Refuge (*Beth Gawsa*)

In the Syriac tradition, the Church which is a haven is also a place of refuge for the believers. There is an allusion to this imagery in Num. 35:11 which will serve as a 'type' to the Church. Along with the biblical thought, we hear from the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, where Judas prays: "To thee be glory, Living One, who art from the Living One: to Thee be glory, Help and Aider of those who come to Thy place of refuge".⁴⁸ In the same way the liturgical prayer orates: "Our Lord made a haven of peace and a refuge of atonement for those who are afflicted".⁴⁹ "To the house of refuge of your Church all your worshippers receive your holy mysteries which will be for the pardoning of their sins".⁵⁰ Here arise few questions: who is actually the refuge, who made the Church a

refuge or what makes the Church a refuge, to whom it is a refuge? etc. The Syriac tradition answers differently: first of all it says Christ himself is the refuge and secondly, the Holy Trinity made it house of refuge for the sinners.

1. Christ is the Refuge

In the Syriac tradition the expression *beth gawsa* is a title to Christ as well as to the Church. As a proper title to Christ it is found in the *Acts of Thomas*. In some of the prayers of Judas Thomas, he addressess Christ as refuge: "Our Lord, companion of His servants and guide and conductor of those who believe in Him and refuge and repose of the afflicted and hope of the poor".⁵¹ "Thou art God, the Son of God, the Saviour and helper, and Refuge, and rest of all those who weary in Thy work".⁵² Again in another context Judas says to Sifur that there is no place for fear if you take refuge in Jesus: "Be not afraid but believe in Jesus, who pleadeth for both me and thee and for all those who take refuge with him and come to His place of assembly".⁵³

Though there are many instances⁵⁴ in the OT calling God as the refuge, there is no reference in the NT to designate Christ with this title. But

47 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 419, 438.

48 Act VI, 60., A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas*, 97.

49 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 403.

50 " " " 407, 412.

51 Act I, 10., A. F. J. Klijn, *The Act of Thomas*....., 69.

52 Act VI, 60 " " " 97.

53 Act IX, 102., " " " 117.

54 2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 14:6; 18:2; 31:2 etc.

there are various prayers, in the Syriac liturgical tradition, that deal with the above said idea: "O Courteous one... pour forth the mercies of your grace on your servants O Lord because you are our hope and refuge and help in times of distress".⁵⁵ In the *Hymns on Nativity* St. Ephrem also speaks of the same concept, ie, Christ is the refuge:

Blessed is the Shepherd who became
the sheep for our absolution
Blessed is the Vineshoot that became
the cup of our salvation
Blessed also is the ploughman who
himself became the grain
wheat that was sown and the sheaf
that was reaped
He is the Master Builder who became
a tower for our refuge.⁵⁶

It is not only in the Lord but even in his Name, the worshippers find refuge: "Let all the helps and gifts come out of it for your people and for the flock of your pasture saved by your cross and let them take shelter in the Name of your Majesty".⁵⁷ This portion of prayer reminds us the prayers of great men in the Bible. For example, in his song of deliverance David sings: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and

my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge".⁵⁸ However, it is in the faith also the worshipper finds refuge: "Your servants O Our Saviour, wait for everlasting blessing and life and they take shelter in faith and take refuge under the wings of the cross".⁵⁹ The finding of shelter and refuge under the wings of the cross⁶⁰ alludes to as well as reminds us of the words of the Psalmist: "How precious is thy steadfast love O God! The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings".⁶¹ "Let me dwell in thy tent for ever! Oh to be safe under the shelter of thy wings."⁶² "He will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge".⁶³ It is this kind of trust and experience that enabled St. Paul to say that "...far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..."⁶⁴

2. Trinity Made the Church as a place of Refuge

First of all, it is the Father who made it a place of refuge: "Father with the holiness of your honour fill the temple set apart for your honour with the glory...for the honour of your glory let it be a haven and a place of refuge

55 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 417.

56 *Hymns on Nativity* 3:15., K.E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*...., 86.

57 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 414.

58 2 Sam. 22:2-3.

59 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 425.

60 " " " 425.

61 Ps. 36:7.

62 Ps. 61:4.

63 Ps. 91:4.

64 Gal. 6:14.

to all those who are distressed".⁶⁵ Again, it is the divine presence of the King of kings that made it a place of refuge for the distressed: "O heavenly King of kings, who revealed yourself on Mount Sinai in the sight of angels and men, make the strength of your grace to dwell in the house set apart for your name, so that it shall be a haven for the troubled and hope for contrites".⁶⁶

Moreover, it is the redemptive act of Christ that made her a worthy place of refuge: "Christ who brought back his Church by his body and costly blood and redeemed her through his grace and has given her a dwelling place and a place of refuge to all those who believe in him".⁶⁷ Finally, it is the Holy Trinity who made it a house of refuge: "Sing praise, O holy Church, in the dawn and evening to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, the adorable and holy nature who willed to make you the source of sanctification and a place of refuge for all the weak".⁶⁸ The last portion of the oration indicates the fact 'to whom' she is the haven as well as the refuge: that is, to the weak and the needy. The situation that necessitates the refuge is mainly sin. Consequently, we can say the Church is the refuge of sinners.

3. Church a Refuge for Sinners

The holy Church is not only the refuge for the weak but also for the sinners: "We come to your house O Lord...don't shut O Lord the door of your compassion in the face of repenting sinners, because there is no other house of refuge for them except your holy Church".⁶⁹ Unlike any other refuge, this refuge is a place of consolation to the oppressed and the sinful. It is the only place of refuge where the sinners get forgiveness: "O Lord God of Hosts make your impenetrable strength to abide in this holy temple so that it may be able to give pardon to all the faithful who take refuge in it".⁷⁰ "To the house of refuge of your Church, O Our Lord, run all your worshippers who receive your holy mysteries which will be for the forgiveness of their sins".⁷¹ "The holy apostles proclaimed the marvellous and divine words in the holy Church. Blessed are you O faithful Church, how elevated you are. Blessed are you because you have become the place of refuge for all who are persecuted".⁷²

4. Church the Refuge: Both Earthly and Heavenly

This house of refuge has a universal character. It comprises both heavenly

65	P. Bedjan, <i>Breviarium</i> , Vol. III,	420.
66	" "	396.
67	" "	398.
68	" "	393.
69	" "	393.
70	" "	400.
71	" "	407.
72	" "	438.

and earthly choirs: in the earthly choirs themselves there are many tribes and generations. They all together make happy or rejoice and pray in the holy temple which is a visible symbol of the house of refuge, ie, Church:

In Your great strength O Our Saviour, you perfected your holy temple...the celestial and the earthly companies celebrate today at the feast of the consecration and in awe they entreat that your peace may govern her children and it may be a house of refuge for the tribes and generations.⁷³

The prayer of the heavenly and earthly choirs is for "peace". Peace is the ultimate result of redemption. Those who are under the slavery of sin, oppression and affliction crave for freedom from the enslaving powers and desire for peace.

Conclusion

What we can deduce from the above said interpretations is that although the Church is a haven and a place of refuge to the sinners and she is the source of salvation and peace to all those who come to her, it is not her merit but His - her Lord's - grace that made her so. Ultimately, He is the haven and refuge to all. This shows one of the important theological motives of the Syriac tradition, that is the very existence of the Church is salvific and it is Christ who established her as a visible means to impart the salvation to all through his redemptive act. In other words, Christology and soteriology coincide in ecclesiology. Apart from Christ and the salvific acts of Christ we cannot think of the Church, since, she is the tangible expression of God's salvific plan accomplished in Christ. The Syriac ecclesiology is therefore a soteriologically determined Christology.

Sr. Sophy Rose C M C

73 P. Bedjan, *Breviarium*, Vol. III, 410.

A Voice in the Wilderness

Introduction

The Oriental Catholic Churches in India can neither offer pastoral care to their Oriental Catholic faithful outside the restricted area in India nor can they do evangelical work in their own native country due to the apathy and disregard for the conciliar teaching and the pastoral directives of His Holiness Pope John Paul II by some people. India is a vast country with about a billion population, the vast majority being non-Christian. The predication of the Good News has not reached the ears of this great population. There are in India a lot of religious and cultures, philosophical systems and groups of people. There are Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis etc., and among each group there are subgroups such as Brahmins, Vishnavites, and Sivites. Besides, there are the Dalits, the Adivasis or Tribals- As philosophical systems, we have the systems of Sankara, Rāmānuja and Mādhava. The basic differences of the Dravidians and Aryan traditions are well-known. There are also new religious movements; religion-based parties, religious fundamentalism and religious fanaticism. There is a tendency to sectarianism and fragmentation. At the same time, there is a great urge for globalisation. People of one region are not today restricted to the same place. There is a great movement of population, seeking jobs, from one part of the country to the other parts. It is all the more true of those people who are more educated.

Christianity in India

In India Christianity is a tiny minority. There are Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants. Among the Catholic Church, we have the Latin Church, the Syro-Malabar Church and the Malankara Catholic Church. The whole of India is divided into Latin dioceses. The Syro-Malabar and the Malankara Catholic Churches are forced to restrict themselves to a tiny corner of India. The Orthodox and the Protestant Churches extend their pastoral care to their own faithful wherever they are. All the Kerala-based Churches, except the two Oriental Catholic Churches can freely extend their pastoral care to their faithful unhindered.

Third Millenium

We are marching towards the third Millenium. All who profess Christ should join in hand to impart to others the Christ-experience and the joy of the Good News which they have received from the Lord as a gift. We are trying to evangelize the whole world. It does not consist in subduing people of other cultures to the Western culture. Christianity does not believe in triumphalism, nor in numerical augmentation. Evangelization means sharing the Gospel, which is meant for all (Lk. 1:10-11; Acts 4:12). It is upto each one to accept it or reject it. God's rule and God's kingdom which authentic Christianity preaches is not of this world (Jn. 18:36-37). It is spiritual

and the predication of the Good News which God's own Son has brought to the earth is communication of the Newness of Life, and sharing of the joy of the New Life in Christ, who says "I am the Life" (Jn. 14:6); He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see Life" (Jn 3:36); "I am the light of the World; he who follows me, will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12) "If any one keeps my words, he will never taste death" (Jn. 8:51) "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (10:10); "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn. 11:25). At the same time Jesus Christ, our Lord teaches us clearly that the conversion and the following is of no human endeavour but solely the activity of the Father: "All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out...For this is the will of the Father that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life and will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6:37-40); "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6:44). "No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father" (Jn. 6:65). "When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all men to myself" (Jn. 12:32). "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). It is far from the thought of authentic Christianity to impose one's ideas on others. The contrary is the truth. God has His own designs and plans. In His divine universal plan for salvation, the present day

Christians try to bear witness to the whole truth which is Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the Truth" (Jn. 14:6).

Christians have a grave responsibility to impart the Christ-experience in their life to the vast majority of Indians who never had an opportunity to encounter the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son, the Only Begotten of the Father. All have a fundamental human right to know it: "This Gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come" (Mt. 24:14). In order to present Christ, Christians must be united, because a divided Christianity is contrary to the will of Christ is a counter witness to the proclamation of the Good News, and is a scandal to the world (Jn. 13:35). And in one voice should they proclaim the glory of the Father who called them to light from darkness and impart the joy of the Eternal Life: "This is Eternal Life, that they know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3).

Unity in Diversity

The unity which the Christians should manifest is a unity in diversity. If the content of faith (kerygma) is the same in various Christian traditions, the formulations and all that are connected with it, must be considered and respected not as contradictory but as complementary. There is liturgical, theological, spiritual, disciplinary and pastoral pluralism. Ascetical practices also vary. It is this new attitude that led to the recognition of the non-Chalcedonian (Oriental Orthodox) Assyrian (so-called Nestorian)

Christologies. The Catholic Church can now dissociate the errors from the teachings of the Churches who were supposed to be teaching these errors. Errors are always errors but to say that the non-Catholic churches who have different formulations are in error is far from the ecumenical mentality of the Catholic Church today. It is this attitude which led to the acceptance of a variety of Eastern Churches with diversified liturgical traditions to the Catholic Church in the past. These Eastern Catholic Churches maintain their own spiritual, disciplinary, liturgical and doctrinal patrimony in the unity and communion of the Catholic Church.

Church of Thomas Christians

The Syro Malabar Church, the Malankara Catholic Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church (Malankara), the Mar Thoma Church, the Thozhiyoor Church, and the Church of the East form the ancient St. Thomas Christianity in India. According to the very ancient tradition of these churches, St. Thomas is their Apostle. Until the arrival of the Western missionaries in the 16th century in India, there was only one Church, one liturgy and one unique tradition here - the East Syrian. There were Christians of the Eastern tradition in various parts of India, and in the neighbouring region. The Western missionaries of the Latin Church ruled over the Thomas Christians for three centuries (1599-1896). As a result of the rule of the Western missionaries, there started the fragmentation of this ancient Apostolic Church. Thus we have:

1 The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church which was always Catholic and which

lived always in full communion with the See of Peter in Rome. The Church had suffered a lot from the missionaries and is still suffering due to their influence. It has about 3.3 million faithful.

2 The Syrian Orthodox Church: This section broke away from the rule of the Western Latin missionaries in 1653 and eventually came under the influence of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch in the 19th century. They lost full communion with the See of Peter in Rome. From this group arose almost all the subsequent factions in Kerala, such as the Mar Thoma Church, the Thozhiyoor Church, the Malankara Orthodox Church and the Malankara Catholic Church. There were defections into various liberal protestant groups and charismatic groups such as the Pentacostals from this church. There were several attempts to reunify the two groups, but by the Western missionaries who were here, it was systematically (aborted) torpepoed. This Syrian Orthodox Church and the various divided groups can take care of their faithful wherever they are and are not hindered by anybody, while the Syro-Malabar Church which was always Catholic and the Malankara Catholic Church cannot do so in their own native country!

3 The Thozhiyoor Church: a break-away faction from the Syrian Orthodox Church in 1772. It has less than 5000 faithful and is using the Syro-Antiochene liturgy, but is in communion with the semi-protestant Mar Thoma Church. It is near Trichur and has one bishop.

4 Madhya Kerala diocese of the Church of South India (= CSI) has about 64% of its faithful from the St. Thomas Christian tradition. In 1836 when the Syrian Orthodox Church broke away all contacts and cooperations with the Western protestant missionaries, about 6000 Syrians joined the Anglicans (Church Missionary Society-CMS). Later this CMS diocese became part of the newly formed CSI Church in 1947. They may be about 55,000.

5 The Mar Thoma Syrian Church came into existence after 1889 when they lost a civil litigation with the Syrian Orthodox (1879-89). They were then known as the Reformed Jacobite Party. They are at present about 0.7 million. They take care of their faithful wherever they are and no body is obstructing them.

6 The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church or the Orthodox Party which was separated from the Syrian Orthodox Church in 1912. They were in civil litigations which the Syrian Orthodox Church (no. 2 above) since 1913. From 1913 onwards there were continuous civil litigations: Vattippanakkēss (1913-1928); Samudāyakkēss (1838-58); Randām Samudāyakkēss (1974-). And unfortunately even today it continues. It is indeed a great scandal to Christianity. People in large number is moving from this church to various pentacostal groups. There is no sign of peaceful settlement and coexistence between the two factions of this ancient community. They have parishes and bishops throughout India and even outside India. At present this church is counted among one of the

Oriental Orthodox Churches. The two groups together, namely the Syrian Orthodox (Syrian Patriarch Party) and the Malankara Orthodox (Catholics' Party) may be less than 1.3 million faithful at present. But some say they are more than 2 million. There is no exact statistics available.

7 The Malankara Catholic Church which came into full Catholic communion in 1930, with the leadership of Archbishop **Mar Ivanios** of blessed memory. From the separation in 1653 (Coonan Cross Oath) onwards there were several attempts of reunion and in God's merciful providence it became a reality only in this century. There were discussions between Rome and the Malankara Orthodox Church since 1926. The leadership came from the Catholics' group. Mar Ivanios was deputed to negotiate and when it came into a reality only Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos, his suffragan entered into full communion with the Bishop of Rome. This is unique in its nature. There was no external force instigating the Orthodox to become Catholic. There was no proselytism nor uniatism. On the contrary, there were several kinds of opposition both from the side of the Catholics and from the side of the Orthodox. Mar Ivanios had to encounter a lot of difficulties in the beginning, especially from the civil government in Travancore. This ecumenical movement is known in the history as the **reunion movement**, since it **re-united** the two sections of the Thomas Christians separated in 1653. It was a reunion. Both Rome and the Malankara leadership were guided by the ecclesiology of 1930. This is the only ecumenical movement in this century, which brought about a full communion of two Churches.

Today the Malankara Catholic Church has its members from the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Malankara Orthodox Church (major section), the Mar Thoma Church, the Thozhiyoor Church, the CSI....It has Dalit Ēzhava, Nādar and Syrian Christians (0.3 million) in four dioceses.

8 The Church of the East at Trichur which broke away from the Syro-Malabar church in 1908. It has about 15000 members. According to some they are less than 15000, a tiny minority in and around Trichur. Originally they all belonged to one parish (Vyākulamātha parish). They are at present with Mar Dinkha IV of the Assyrian Church. But they are not Assyrians.

9 The St. Thomas Evangelical Church which broke away from the Mar Thoma Church in 1961. It is again split into two groups. Both groups together may be about 5000. They both have become liberal protestants.

Undue Western Influence-Cause of Division

These divisions and fragmentations were due to the activities of the Western-Latin, Protestant, Syrian Orthodox-missionaries. They unduly interfered in the life of this Church. And one can expect always the cooperation of some native Christians supporting the missionaries. The bishops of the Thomas Christians were "Metropolitans of all India (Kollā Hendo) and their Archdeacon was "Archdeacon of all India". Although the early Latin Bishops of the Thomas Christians had jurisdiction in a limited area, they too styled themselves "Metro-

politans of All India". The Catholic Syro-Malabar Church, was further divided between the Padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions, and the priestly formation was controlled by the missionaries. This is unheard of in the history of Christianity that an Oriental Apostolic Church was kept so long under the rule of another Church (1599-1896). It does not mean that Syro-Malabarians accepted the Western missionaries willingly. They were constantly appealing to Rome; but the western colonial powers were so powerful in those days that even in the ecclesiastical circles the cry of the Thomas Christians was *a voice in the wilderness*! At all costs the missionaries wanted to continue their power here. So they hindered the reunification of the two groups consistently.

Today's Situation

Today we live in a united, free, democratic, secular Indian Union. Times have very much changed. 1998 is not 1923 (when the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was re-established) nor 1930 (the reunion and communion between the Malankara and Roman churches). Today the ecumenical horizon has widened and throughout Christianity we find a new ecumenical outlook and greater openness and a sincere mentality of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The second Vatican Council has opened a new door for a better humanity. There is a radical change in outlooks and in mutual relations between churches.

According to the mentality of the Pre-Vatican period, many of the Oriental Catholic Churches were latinised and

many in the West stood for uniformity in everything except liturgical diversity. Vatican Council II very strongly and emphatically directed the whole Church to regain the authenticity especially of the Oriental Churches which had deviated from the Oriental Patrimony. Secondly, the Council has directed that all the Churches have equal rights and responsibilities and are equally entrusted to the pastoral care of the Bishop of Rome. And Oriental Catholics wherever they are, have the right to worship according to their own patrimony. The Council has made it sufficiently clear that nobody can hinder the Orientals from taking care of their own faithful. And it is very clear that nobody can act contrary to a solemn declaration of an ecumenical Council. In addition to that, all the subsequent Papal and Curial pronouncements and statements are confirming the Conciliar teaching.

Indian Situation

Because of the high literacy and few job opportunities in Kerala, the People in Kerala including the Oriental Catholics are moving to every part of India, especially to the big industrial cities in India. Many have gone to West Asian, European and American countries. This is a new situation. The non Catholic churches in Kerala sent their own pastors after these migrants to take care of their pastoral needs. But the two Oriental Catholic Churches suffered a great set back because of the canonical restri-

ctions imposed on them. The oriental non Catholic Churches established their own parishes and hierarchies all over India and even outside India. But it was not permitted to the Oriental Catholic Churches. These Catholics could not worship God in their own way, according to their liturgical traditions under their own ecclesial head. They had to follow the Latin rite and in most cases they were pastorally neglected and uncared for. As a result *there was a strong erosion of faith and proselytism to Pentacostalism*, especially in the big cities. The Oriental Catholic Churches lost quite a number of their faithful because of the lack of pastoral care, and propaganda of the pentacostals. This is indeed a great loss for the Catholic Church.

Voice in the Wilderness

The problem was raised in the Second Vatican Council by Metropolitan Benedict Mar Gregorios of blessed memory and Bishop Mar Sebastian Valloppilly.¹ Both of them explained that the territorial restriction imposed on the two ancient Oriental Churches in India are unjust and that the Oriental Churches in India should have equal pastoral and missionary opportunities. Mar Gregorios asked in the Council:²

"It is necessary from the point of view of justice. We speak of the religious liberty of all the children of God. If so, why should we deny to the Catholics of the Oriental Churches the right of

¹ *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, vol. III, part V, Vatican, 1975, p. 258-259; *Christian Orient*, 6/2 (1985) 73-81.

² *Ibid.* 73.

practising their rite and preserving their patrimony? We vindicate and rightly too the rights of the Jews and the Muslims. If so, why should Christians of the Oriental rites be in a worse condition?" Then the Archbishop goes on explaining why it is imperative to have parishes and hierarchies of the Oriental rites outside the restricted areas in Kerala:³ "The best solution will be to erect parishes and eparchies of the oriental rite wherever the faithful belonging to that rite are numerous as also to concede to the Orientals ecclesiastical territories (provinces) of their rite." Mar Valloppilly also explained the need.⁴ *But nothing happened,*

Trichy CBCI

The problem was raised in the Catholic Bishops' Conference at Trichy in 1982 (9-16 January) by Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios (the present Metropolitan of the Malankara Catholic Church) and by Mar Joseph Powathil (the present Archbishop of Changanacherry).⁵ After explaining the Conciliar teachings Mar Baselios wondered:⁶ "We are unable to identify the reason behind the persuasion to deny the legitimate facilities for evangelisation and pastoral care to the apostolic churches which are in communion with Holy See of Rome. We wonder if it would be a punishment for

their catholicity and communion, and would be tantamount to helping the non-Catholics in their claim to be the authentic Indian Church... The Orthodox Church communities are entertaining fear and apprehensions that they would in the event of regaining communion with Rome, lose their autonomy, freedom and individuality. Carefully they are observing what happens to the so called Reunited Churches. Undoubtedly they remain a test dose for the treatment they would expect from the Roman Church". Mar Powathil also explained the Oriental perspectives.⁷ After the CBCI meeting there were several inter-ecclesial discussions.⁸ They could not solve the problem and again the problem was referred to Rome.

Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1985

Mar Antony Padiyara and Mar Joseph Powathil (Syro-Malabar) jointly submitted an appeal to the Bishops' Synod indicating and explaining the Pastoral and Missionary problems of the Oriental Churches in India (6th Dec. 1985).⁹ In addition, both of them spoke in the same synod and raised the issue. They explained extensively from the Conciliar documents and tried to demonstrate that the demands of the Orientals are legitimate.¹⁰

3 *Ibid.* 74.

4 *Ibid.* 74-76.

5 *Christian Orient*, 3/1-2 (1982) 5-35.

6 *Ibid.* 30-31.

7 *Ibid.* 5-25.

8 *The Inter-Ritual Dialogue 1883-1984* (Catholic Bishops' Conference of India) New Delhi.

9 *Christian Orient*, 8/1-2 (1986) 26-31.

10 *Ibid.* 32-40.

"The directives of Vatican II", concluded Mar Antony Padiyara, "regarding the pastoral care of the emigrants and the evangelizing ministry remain to be implemented substantially, the implementation of which is a basic condition for an authentic growth of the Syro Malabar Church and the spiritual well being of her sons and daughters scattered throughout India and abroad".¹¹

Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios of blessed memory spoke in the name of the Malankara Church in the Synod:¹² "Before the missionaries came from Europe, we Catholic Orientals lived in India in peace and perfect freedom for a millenium and a half. We Orientals are part and parcel of India, with our spiritual and religious traditions... Two million Thomas Christians today live separated from the Catholic Church primarily due to the unwise policies of the Latin missionaries!"

In the same synod His Beatitude Myroslav J. Cardinal Lubachivsky submitted a written note on behalf of the Oriental Catholic Churches in India.¹³ "These Easterners are asking for their own priests to serve them spiritually... One of our brother bishops (Archbishop Henry d'Souza, the present Archbishop of Calcutta) strongly disagreed on basis that *there is a law* which says, "In one

location there cannot be two jurisdictions, only one, and that must be the one established first". -When Christ stood before Pilate, He also heard the people claim: "We have a law and according to that law He must die" (Jn 19:7). *Brothers, we must help these Eastern Rite Indians to live.* "They must be allowed to have their own spiritual leaders and their own missions for their people. We cannot allow religious suppression in the Church".

"This reminds one of a remark at the time of Vatican I."¹⁴ There was a discussion on appointing bishops of their own for the Syro Malabarians. Cardinal Joachim Pecchi asked, "If the Syro Malabarians want to have bishops of their own rite and community, why can't we give that? Then the reply of the missionary bishop Leonardo Mellano was, "Your eminence, It is none of your business". And the Cardinal Joachim Pecchi did not utter a word further. After some time this same cardinal became the next Pope as Leo XIII.

Papal Intervention

After two years in 1987 Pope John Paul II wrote a personal letter to all the Catholic bishops in India asking them to implement the teaching of Vatican II regarding the Oriental church-

11 „ 36.

12 „ 44

13 „ 49-50.

14 J. Pananthanam, *The Canonical Reforms of Leonardo Mellano*, Rome, 1976 (Doctoral Thesis) p 7, n. 27.

ches.¹⁵ After briefly explaining the historical background of the issue the Holy Father says: "In fidelity then to the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and in view of the present circumstances prevailing in the Indian context, after having closely examined all the documentation which has been presented to the Holy See, as well as the result of the meetings of the Pontifical Commission appointed at my direction to study the inter-ritual problems existing in India, by virtue of my office as Supreme Pastor of the Universal Church I wish to state the following:

1. The bishops of each of the three Rites have the right to establish their own Episcopal bodies in accordance with their own ecclesiastical legislation.

2. As the decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches points out, all the Churches under the pastoral governance of the Roman Pontiff have the same rights and obligations, including what concerns the preaching of the gospel, always under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff (OE. 3).

3. Regarding the Pastoral Care of the faithful of the Eastern Rites who are living in the Latin Rite dioceses, in accordance with the spirit and letter of the Conciliar Decree *Christus Dominus* 23, 3 and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 4, the Latin Ordinaries of such dioceses are to provide as soon as possible for an adequate pastoral care of the faithful of these Eastern Rites, through the ministry of the priests or through pari-

shes of the Rite where this would be indicated or through an Episcopal Vicar endowed with the necessary faculties, where circumstances would so indicate (CD 23. 3; Canon 383. 2:476; 518).

After this Papal intervention the diocese of Kalyan was established for the Syro-Malabar Church in the Bombay Pune area and a few parishes were established in a few big cities. The erection of Kalyan diocese was specified in the apostolic letter. After this letter, some influential ecclesiastics were hindering the execution of this Papal decision. There were manipulations of various kinds, so that the Papal decree may slowly be implemented or never.

Even today the Orientals have to depend on the good will of the Latin bishops. The Papal document is very clear. Now what remains is its undiluted implementation. Oriental Catholics do not ask for any restriction on the Latins. We believe in the communion ecclesiology and it does not mean subjugation of one church by another church or over-protectionism by one church,. But it appears that *even today our voice is a voice in the wilderness!* We expect that we the Oriental Catholic Churches be treated as separate individual churches (*sui-juris*) having the right to keep our own patrimony, and to be ourselves, distinct from other churches, however big they may be. We have the right to be ourselves as the Conciliar documents and the Papal document teach us. This basic right we cannot forego. If we forego we would be betraying Orientalism, and

15 *Christian Orient*, 8/2 (1987) 95-98.

our own basic duties before God as Churches of specific traditions.

We firmly believe in the words of His Holiness the Pope: "Let us continue to reflect on the marvellous mystery of the Universal Church and all the Churches or Rites which make up her variety in unity. May the entire centre of all your pastoral solicitude be the Church's unity and communion.... The Second Vatican Council emphasized the Church's vocation to be a sign of the unity of mankind, so often divided by ethnic, political, cultural and linguistic rivalries, and thus oppressed by all sorts of tensions. This vocation brings with it the need for reconciliation where unity has been impaired or damaged. Hence there is the need for the closest possible communion and collaboration between the different Rites in your beloved country".¹⁶

In 1987 January 6, His Eminence William Cardinal Baum, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education sent a circular letter concerning studies of the Oriental Churches.¹⁷ At the end of the circular the Cardinal says, "It is clear that despite progress in this area, there is still need among Catholics of the Latin tradition for a great deal of knowledge of the people, traditions and Churches of the Christian East".¹⁸

Recent Incident

We the Orientals are compelled to raise this issue once again because of what we have witnessed in the recent *Colloquium of Bishops and Theologians*

at Bangalore, on 10-13 December 1997. Although there are three valid and legitimate ecclesial traditions in India, the papers and discussions were centred around one type of theology. We are sorry to remark that many of the participants were utterly *insensitive* to the two major Indian Oriental Catholic ecclesial traditions. They simply ignore these two traditions. For many of them Catholic Church is the Latin Church and the Oriental Churches are rites with some minor liturgical variations as appendices to the 'Catholic Church', to be tolerated for some more time and to be kept as museum pieces in a tiny corner of India at some pockets. The orientation papers present Western theological systems.

The Orientals did not expect such harsh arrogant and colonial treatment from the part of the members of another Catholic tradition. And a surprising factor is that many of those who were insensitive to Oriental Catholicism were "ex Syro Malabarians". As boys they left the Mother Church and joined the Latin dioceses or Religious Orders, and were trained in the Western system. One could notice that they have affiliation neither to the Latin church nor to the Mother church.

The discussions were rational, devoid of ecclesial, patristic and liturgical traditions. Some were using high sounding words, cast in the Western mould. Certain ideas were akin to what we hear from the Pentecostals and Jehova Witnesses in Kerala.

16 *Ibid.* 97-98.

17 *Ibid.* 85-94.

18 „ 93-94.

The one who can shout loudly will be better listened to. Often one could hear in talks: "That problem is settled". If this is the theology which our future priests are going to get in India, it will be very detrimental to the cause of Jesus Christ and to the **folly of His Cross**. This type of theology is nothing but borrowal of Western liberal protestantism. It was very difficult to find the Indianness either in the worship in those days there, nor in the theological deliberations. Many spoke of diversity and plurality. But they were not prepared to accept the ecclesial pluralism in India. They speak of an Indian church with diversified liturgies, and at the same time they simply ignore the diversities already existing in Indian Catholicism. They speak for less Roman interference, by that they mean less interference in implementing the rights of the Oriental Catholic Churches. They have already settled the oriental problem!

Uniqueness of Christ

As Christians we cannot dilute the Christian mystery and we should not by any means. But we should explain the mysteries in a language intelligible to the various groups and cultures in India. We cannot hide the Truth, we should not present partial truth in order to please others. We should present the whole mystery of Christ just as

St. Peter did, "You are Christ, Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). *We should not hesitate to proclaim the uniqueness of Christ, the relevance of the Church and the unique working of the Holy Spirit in the Church and through the Church.* By diluting the mysteries we are not going to gain anybody for Christ. Forgetting the complex Indian situation and ignoring the diversities, these people take into consideration just the concern of those who take part in "Hindu-Christian Dialogue". It is just one Indian reality. This was very well pointed out by more than one bishop during the Colloquium.

The Malankara Catholic Church

The Malankara Catholic Church has at present personal parishes in the following places¹⁹: 1) Bombay Region: Ullas Nagar, Sakinaka, Borivili. 2) Pune Region: Ramwadi, Kirkee, Warjae Malwani, Pimple Gurav, Dehu Road, Chinchwad, Bhosari. 3) Hyderabad-Secundarabad. 4) Nasik. 5) Aurangabad. 6) Calcutta. 7) Borsi-Durg (Bhilai). 8) Bhopal. 9) Delhi- Faridabad. 10) Madras; Padi, Perampoor. Thiruvattiyoore. 11) Bangalore.

Now it is high time to bring these parishes under one Malankara eparchy and constitute a hierarchy as directed by His Holiness John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter to the Catholic Bishops

19 *Joint Pastoral Letter* of the Malankara Catholic Bishops on 15-1-1998 (Prot. No. C. P. L. 5/98); *Parish Directory* St. Mary's Malankara Catholic Church, Garland/Texas, 1997 (it gives the list of the Malankara Catholic Missions of North America).

in India in 1987 May 29. In other places also the Malankara Church has to be organised. It is a sad thing that we have to depend on the good will of the local Latin bishops.

The Malankara Catholic Mission Centres in America²⁰: 1) Bronx. 2) Long Island. 3) Staten Island. 4) New Jersey. 5) Philadelphia. 6) Washington D. C. 7) Chicago. 8) Dallas. 9) Houston. 10) Toronto.

There are six mission centres in Germany where the Malankara Catholics gather: 1) Dortmund. 2) Köln-Bonn. 3) Mainz. 4) Frankfurt. 5) Krefeld 6) Heidelberg-Stuttgart. The apostolic Letter should also be put into actuality in this regions also.

It is high time that the Malankara Catholic Church establishes itself as a Church outside the restricted area in Kerala. The Orthodox, the Jacobites and the Mar Thomites have their own hierarchies. Very recently His Eminence Cardinal Achille Silvestrini reiterated the official stand of the Catholic Church regarding the pastoral care of the Eastern Catholics. His Eminence was speaking at the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops: "The Congregation for the Oriental Churches is committed to continuing to promote, in an ever more effective way, the pastoral care of Eastern Catholics, according to the various models prescribed (OE 4) even to the point of establishing

their own ecclesiastical jurisdictions when they are requested and the good of the faithful requires it....The purpose of pastoral care for Eastern Catholics is not to assimilate them to the faithful of the Latin Church, but to preserve their own rite in theory and practice".²¹

Conclusion

We have to maintain the unity and diversity of the Catholic Church. The early Church succeeded in keeping a balance between the two. During the subsequent periods, especially after the separation and alienation of the Eastern Churches from the Catholic Church, the unity was not sufficiently stressed by the Easterners. In the West, however, many identified unity with uniformity, and they did not pay enough attention to diversity. It affected the Oriental Catholic Churches and they are still suffering from it as we see today in India. The idea of unity in diversity as taught by Vatican II is not fully put into practice. Many are still thinking and acting in the preconciliar way, namely insisting on uniformity for the sake of unity. They still see diversity as the cause of division and they insist on uniformity.

But the Oriental Catholic Churches in India are arguing for unity in diversity, and tolerance from the part of all concerned. In India there must be the closest collaboration among the Christians, especially among the Catholics of

20 See a reference to the Syro-Malankara Church in the USA, in Cambridge Studies in Religious Traditions: R. B. Williams, *Christian Pluralism in the United States*. The Indian immigrant experience, Cambridge University press, p. 148-149.

21 *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition) No. 2 (1524), 14 January 1998, p. 13.

the various traditions. But this has to be done accepting in theory and in practice the principle of unity in diversity. The Malankara Catholics have the right to worship God in their own way together with their own liturgical head, namely under their own bishops. One can put any number of objections to it as some were doing for long in the past, inspite of the Papal decree. And if one is not open to the whole truth to which the Spirit of the Lord guides us, one will continue to argue against the legitimate rights of the Orientals in India. One may produce any number of arguments, but the hidden motif will be, knowingly or unknowingly, unity based on uniformity. In other words, in the Indian context, we must be prepared for unity in diversity, within a church and among the churches of the Catholic communion. *One need not be afraid of multijurisdiction. We have to face the reality one day.* The Orientals will not be satisfied by anything short of that.

The growth of a particular church will be the growth of the Catholic Church. In India the various Catholic Churches should adopt an attitude of reconciliation and mutual trust and co-operation, rather than an attitude of elimination or confrontation. We should show before our Orthodox brethren that we Catholics do believe genuinely in the Catholicity of the Church of Christ. We should show that the Oriental Catholic Churches have an honorable place in the Catholic communion and that they are not secondary churches because of

their numerical insignificance compared with the Latin Church.

As Cyril Mar Baselios, the Malankara Metropolitan says: "The relationship of the Latin and Oriental Churches in India should be the symbol of the unity of the universal church. The position enjoyed and the role given to be played by the Malankara Catholic Church in India should be a lesson both to its own members and to others on the ecclesiology proposed by the Second Vatican Council".²²

In all confrontations the loss will be for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and for his mission in the vast sub continent. Everyone loses because the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church loses, as His Eminence Cardinal Ivan Lubachivsky wrote recently. The Catholicity has to be experienced in the everyday life of the church, in the mutual relationship among the churches and in dealing with the Eastern Catholic Churches, especially those who entered into communion with the Holy Roman See and those who remained always Catholic in spite of all sorts of difficulties for centuries. "One need not be a prophet or son of a prophet, to foresee and foretell that this (anti-oriental) policy, if persisted in, will do much damage to the Christian and Catholic cause in India. We are today a Church at risk. If we are not Christian enough to bear one another's burdens, let us at least be human enough not to add to others burdens not to deny justice to others and not to try to lord over others".²³

Dr. Geevarghese Cheddiath

22 *Christian Orient*, 3/1-2 (1982) 58.

23 „ 5/3 (1984) 133.

East as the Homeland of Iconology and Iconography: An Ecclesiological Evaluation

In theology there is a saying that the east is iconic and the west is pictorial. Pictures are about meaning. Icons are about being. This difference shows the distinction between eastern and western christian worship.¹ Syriac Orient and Greek East are the homelands of iconic theology and iconography. Image theology and writing of icons are heritages of the catholic church. They are expressions of the one Church of Christ. In this article we try to highlight the theological foundation of image theology and icons in an ecclesiological perspective. Icons are not ordinary portrayals of biblical topics, rather they are representations of a protracted tradition of reflection on these themes.² Here in this study, we are not dealing with icons simply as an artistic work. Our main concern is to prepare the ecclesial basis of the theology of icons. The image theology is a semitic reality, though it has seen a particular kind of development in the Byzantine world. The iconic theology is originally semitic and Syrian, though the art of writing specific icons is mainly a Byzantine reality.

Before entering into the details we have to keep a historical and genuine

understanding of christian heritage and eastern heritage. Speaking about the christian culture we could say that three worlds, three cultures, three visions went to the making of the christian church: the semitic, the hellenistic, and the latin. Each of them has produced its own distinctive theology.³ Before christianity spread in the Greek and Roman world and adopted its language and imagery it had a first period in which its context was Jewish and language Aramaic. However, the tendency, untill recently was to see only two main strands in the history of christian tradition—the Greek east and Latin west. This is a position which is rather onesided and one which does not take into consideration the semitic pole of christianity. To limit the early christian tradition to its Greek and Latin expressions is to distort the historical reality and weakens our understanding⁴ of the christian heritage. What we need is a tri-partite view of christian tradition—Aramaic (Syriac), Greek and Latin. Another thing is that iconology and iconography are products of the 'catholic church'. They are to be considered as authentic heritages of the one Church of Christ. There is an easy tendency among the theologians to identify eastern ortho-

1 Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, (New York: 1992), 4.

2 Cf. Yakive Krehovetsky, "The Holy Spirit and Icons", *Diakonia* 13 (1978), 15

3 J. Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, (London: 1964), i.

4 S. Brock, "Two Poles of Syriac Tradition", in C. Payngot (ed) *Homage to Mar Cariattil* (Kottaya : 1992), 74.

doxy (in its confessionalistic sense) and iconography. This tendency is also to be checked. East as a whole is the proud centre of iconography, neither the Greek east nor the eastern orthodox in isolation. The theological importance of the icons is something that has been developed in the context of the origin of the Church, the development of monasticism, asceticism and the liturgical traditions. Hence the constitutive role of the Syriac Orient in this case is very clear.

Relevance of Art in Theology

Throughout the history of the church art has displayed itself in the unfolding of faith and life of christian believers. Art is defined as the application of proficiency, dexterity, erudition and taste to the aesthetic aspect of beauty, feeling and emotion through the media of color and form.⁵ The eastern theology itself is known as artistic because of its deep connection with icons.⁶ The oriental art is rooted in theology and vice versa too.⁷ It is in this context that we speak about the theological significance of icons. Art has served in diverse ways throughout history: symbolic, didactic, devotional, decorative or a mixture thereof.⁸ When the images in a work of art engages or transforms the observer through the least use of forms or in a enigmatic

style that art may be called symbolic, like the images in the catacombs. Where the visual images describe an account or an incident in an uplifting manner the art is didactic like Leonardo's Last Supper. When the imagery leads the viewer into prayer, religious experience, or spiritual engagement the work of art is devotional like Michaelangelo's Vatican Pieta. When the visual images are agreeable to the viewers aesthetic feelings but otherwise unintelligible because of their complex nature, the art work is decorative and ornamental like the calligraphic letterin of medieval manuscripts.⁹

An icon is not a mere sign, A sign informs and instructs. Its content is of the most rudimentary kind and without any presence. This is true for algebric signs, chemical formulae, road signs etc. In these cases there is no relation of presence between the sign and that which is signified. In the same way an allegory is a means of explaining something by the use of analogical figures. A symbol in the mind of the Fathers of the Church and according to the liturgical tradition contains in itself the presence of that which it signifies. It bears a meaning and it communicates a presence.¹⁰ The symbol is a bridge coupling the visible with the invisible, the earthly with the heavenly.¹¹

5 J. Komonchak et ali (eds), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, (Dublin: 1987), 59.

6 Cf. K. K. Tong, "A Study of Thematic Differences Between Eastern and Western Religious Thought", *JES* 10 (1973), 341.

7 Aristeides Papadakis, *The Theological Premise of Byzantine Iconography*, in *John XXIII Lectures*, Vol II, (New York, 1969), 48.

8 *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 59.

9 *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 59.

10 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", *One in Christ* 3 (1967), 165.

11 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 169.

The acceptance and the authentic role of art in the early church facilitated the separation of christianity from judaism. The opening discussion of the role and objective of art in christianity revolved around the Hebraic injunction against images and the constant warning of idolatry in religious worship. In several documents of the early church fathers, we find the problem of images dealt with from the two foundations of christianity; the hebraic and the Greco-hellenistic traditions.¹² Visual art was a vehicle of religious training in the early christianity. All art was for the glory of God. Art is characterized by Aquinas as a handmaiden of theology.¹³ Art is something affective and emotive which acts on the sensibility. But sacred art is precisely opposed to everything soft and reassuring owing to the ascetic objectivity natural to it.¹⁴

Etymological Clarifications

The word icon comes from the Greek word *eikon* meaning image. It is the

word used in the Greek Bible in Genesis chapter one. The same word is used in St. Paul when he speaks of Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God.¹⁵ The Syriac equivalent is *demutha*. The word iconography comes from the Greek *graphia*, a writing, that means the writing of icons. Iconolatry is derived from the Greek *latreia*, worship, image worship. Iconomachy is from *mache*, fight, means opposition to image worship. Iconostasis from the Greek *eikonostasis*, a place in eastern churches, a screen shutting off the sanctuary on which the icons are placed. Iconophilism means a taste and love for icons. Iconology means the study (theological) of icons.¹⁶ Iconography is the art of icon writing. The content of iconography is the pictorial or symbolical depiction of christian ideas, persons and history. It is not a style of artistic criticism. It is more in the line of a historical and theological study.¹⁷ The word iconoclasm comes from the Greek *klaien* which means to break. It is the act of breaking images. Iconoclasm means image breaking.¹⁸

12 The New Dictionary of Theology, 60.

13 The New Dictionary of Theology, 61.

14 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 172.

15 J. Baggley, *Doors of Perception: Icon and Their Spiritual Significance*, (Oxford: 1987), 1.

16 For details cf. *Chambers English Dictionary*, (Cambridge, 1988), 705.

17 For details, M. R. Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture*, (Boston, 1985) 25.

18 Iconoclasm refers to a controversy that occurred in two stages and that disrupted the eastern Churches for more than a century. In 726 emperor Leo III forbade the use of religious images and ordered them destroyed. The empress Irene undid this policy in the early 780's and the second council of Nicaea 787, defined images as worthy of veneration and ordered them restored. In 814 iconoclasm broke out again under emperor Leo V.

The word icon is commonly used to characterize the religious pictures, namely portable wood pannel paintings. It has different meanings such as figure, image, portrait, etc. In eastern churches it means a figure representing Christ, Mother of God or saints. Icons have a conspicuous and prestigious place in the theology, worship and spirituality of the eastern churches. An icon is a sacred representation upon sacred vessels and garments, on walls painted with colours, made in mosaics, or out of any other material.¹⁹ Icon may also portray an incident from the Bible or from hagiography.²⁰

Origin and Development

The art of icon is suffused with theology. This art developed prosperous already from the time of the catacombs where we meet a purely sign-art. The catacombs mark the opening of christian art. Catacombs were mainly subterranean cemeteries where people went to revere their dead. There were different types of portraits in the catacombs. Christianity soon appropriated this model. Christians do not just confine themselves to adapting symbols that already existed. They designed new ones. The christian art was meant to be instructive and didactic.²¹ Its aim is pedantic and instructive. It announces salvation and traces the devices thereof by means of various signs. These signs

can be arranged in three groups: 1) those to do with water, for example Noah's ark, 2) those connected with bread and wine: multiplication of the loaves, 3) those to do with the images of salvation and the saved, Daniel in the lion's den.²² The Victory of Constantine in 312 enabled christianity to rank in the status of a state religion already in 313. Christian art bursts forth from the catacombs and supplanted art themes of pagan inspiration. Thereafter artists were authorized and worked straightforward for the new religion. Then over the centuries of the great councils and the refining iconoclastic period the theology of icons developed. It involved many Fathers like Basil, Damascus, Theodore the Studite.

The Semitic / Syriac Background of Icons

Icon is the result of the synthesis of three cultures: Syriac, Greek and Roman. Roman art itself benefited from the Byzantine heritage. In addition to its Roman and Byzantine inheritance, the icon originates from yet another tradition which is of paramount significance for its further progression.²³ The acheiropoietos Icon, the Holy Face, made without human hands was sent to king Abgar by Christ Himself: "From the sixth century onwards, Byzantium was in conflict with the Persians and then with the Arabs. During this period,

19 Definition, in the Second Nicene Council, A. D. 787.

20 Encyclopedia of Knowledge, vol. 10, (Connecticut: 1993), 19.

21 M. Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom* (New York: 1991), 16.

22 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 169.

23 For a historical approach to iconography, cf. M. Vaidyan, *The Icon and Its Theology* (Mavelikara: 1994), 28 ff.

when christianity was confronted with Mazdaism, and Islam, the first acheiropoietes, or images not made by human hands began to appear. Of these the sudarium of Edessa was the most celebrated".²⁴ The leporous king wanted both to see and speak with Jesus. This context is also very important as far as the theology of an icon is considered. The king sent a small deputation from his court. On the way they saw Jesus proclaiming his message in Palestine. Jesus could not satisfy the king's wishes. He then miraculously imprinted his holy face in a linen predetermined for Abgar. Thus the first icon came into existence. This is the root and support for all other icons. A western interpretation of the same icon exists. It is that of Veronica's veil, on to which Jesus supposedly imprinted his face. The word Veronica means vera icona = true icon.²⁵

In Surveying individual images, church tradition sketches the first icons back to the lifetime of the Saviour himself and the period immediately after him. In the History of the Church by Eusebius we read: "I have seen a great many portraits of the saviour, of Peter and Paul which have been preserved up to our times".²⁶ Eusebius' testimony is all the more helpful since he is personally unfriendly to the veneration of the icons. Icons were painted

and devised for veneration. Their paintings seem to be quite well confirmed by the first half of the first century. A confirmation of this fact is the appearance in Constantinople of a portrait of the Virgin and child (Hodegetria) attributed to St. Luke. Luke wrote the first verbal icon of her (his gospel), depicting for us a kind of interior portrait.²⁷

The origin of the type of Mother of God icon commonly called the Guide from the Greek Hodegetria indicating way or guide lies clothed in mystery. Its exact origin cannot be articulated. Tradition ascribes the icon to the hand of St. Luke the evangelist.²⁸ This is the very first attribution of an icon to an evangelist. The Greek word Hodegetria means way or guide in English. Guide here is feminine and is definitely an allusion to the Virgin Mother of God in her position as Guide of the christian faithful. She guides the christian to the way understood as her son Jesus Christ.²⁹ She is the guide or shower of the WAY: That is the place of the Virgin in the christian east. The distinguishing trait which emphasizes the title Hodegetria is the gesture which the virgin makes with her arm. She points to her divine Son with her upraised hand. The hodegetria icon was chosen as the patroness of the artists and iconographers.

24 C. Walter, "The Icon and the Image of Christ the Second Council of Nicaea and Byzantine Tradition", Sobornost 10 (1988), 30.

25 M. Quenot, The Icon..., 23.

26 History of the Church, Book VII, chp 18, PG 20, col 680. For details cf. L. Ouspensky and V. Lossky, The Meaning of Icons, 25.

27 M. Quenot, The Icon..., 15.

28 Joseph Bertha, "Hodegetria Icon of the Mother of God", Diakonia 24 (1991), 121.

29 J. Bertha, "Hodegetria...", 123.

We believe in the existence of the icon of the Saviour during His life time and of icons of the Holy Virgin immediately after him. This tradition certifies that right from the beginning of christianity there had been a clear knowledge of the significance and prospects of the image and that the outlook of the church never changed. This teaching shows that the image is essentially intrinsic to the very nature of christianity.³⁰

The Monkish Origin

Because the icon dispensed spiritual direction for christian life and prayer, its painting remained a privilege of monks for a long time. Before sketching the icon on the arranged board the monk produces it within his heart in serenity. This he does by means of prayer and asceticism. With cleansed heart and eyes he can then depict the image of a transfigured world. The first icon painted by an iconographer is that of Christ. He must pray with tears.³¹ "The painting of icons may be, and in the east has long been, regarded as a religious act for the proper exercise of which the artist should be prepared by prayer and purity of life,....."³² The council of Moscow says: "The painter of icons must be humble, gentle and pious avoiding immoral conversations and mundane scurrility. He must be neither quarrelsome nor envious of others, neither a drunkard nor a thief, he must practice both spiritual and corporeal purity".

Different Theological Aspects of Icon

1 Icon of Words and Icon of Colours

The syriac tradition basically moved on the line of iconic theology. We could name it as icon of words. St. Ephrem may be one of the outstanding examples of this kind of doing theology. "In presenting the imagery of typology, Ephrem often speaks of artists, and their images, their drawing, their figures, and likeness and even of their paints, their colours and the plaques on which they apply the pigments"³³ Figural art, music and poetry have equipped Ephrems chief structure of reference in his project to explain biblical faith. He was not a propositional theologian. His is symbolic theology as opposed to the discursive theology of rational thought. Yet he is a guarantor of doctrines. His exegetical theology is an iconology. On the other side the art of writing icons followed a rational pattern of Greek thought.

It has become a familiar thing in recent scholarship to speak of an original syriac tradition of symbolic theology in contrast to a rationally oriented Greek theology. And no writers of syriac theology is more likely to come to mind in this connection than St. Ephrem the syrian.³⁴ An image theology or iconic theology in its biblical sense is basically a contribution

30 Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 25.

31 M. Quenot, *The Icon...*, 67.

32 J. Goodall, "Icons and Spirituality...", 288.

33 S. H. Griffith, "The Image of the Image Maker in the Poetry of St. Ephrem the Syrian" *Studia Patristica* vol XXV, 1991, 262.

34 S. H. Griffith, "The Image of the Image Maker..." 258.

of the Syriac Orient, though iconography as such developed in the Byzantine world. "Already in the scriptures, of course, God along with his son, according to St. Ephrem is the primordial image maker who made man in his own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). So it is a small step to go to picture God or Christ, or the artist who in the scriptures has painted pictures of the whole economy of salvation in the words and deeds of the prophets and apostles".³⁵

One might almost speak of Ephrem's exegetical and theological discussion as an exercise in ekphrasis, it is an iconology manque, in which the icons are all verbal icons which prompt the creativities of the faithful who read or hear the holy scriptures and who take part in the sacramental mysteries with their eyes illumined by faith.³⁶ A glorious example for Ephrem's use of painting, blending etc is: "Glorious is the wise one who allied and joined divinity with humanity, one from the height and the other from below, he mingled the natures like pigments and an image came into being: God-man."³⁷ Thus he substantiates that Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God the Father. He is the likeness of God (II Cor 4.4). He is the image of the invisible God (Col 1.15). It is from this image theology of Christ that the iconic dimension of the Church emerges. "...The mystery of the Church means that we access through

Christ to the Father, so that in this way we may share in the divine nature. The communion of the Church is prefigured, made possible and sustained by the communion of the Trinity. ...The church is as it were the icon of the trinitarian fellowship of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit".³⁸

2 Ecclesial Foundation

The word iconography primarily means 'to write an icon, not to paint. The beauty of an icon does not primarily come from the elegance of its illustration. The beauty comes from the symmetry and coordination which emanate from the whole icon, since it depicts the splendour of God and of the kingdom. It is the result of a long tradition in which meditation and a painstaking specifications of detail work symmetrically. The making of an icon does not come from an unexpected intuition, not from some great emotion, not from purely theoretical ideas, not from an extraordinary brilliance. In the creation of an icon nothing is done at random or by guess work. It is the result of an on-going process, and advancement in spiritual life.³⁹ It is an expression of the Church.

Genuine iconographers do not attempt to depict external, material reality only, but express as well the spiritual relevance.

35 S. H. Griffith, "The Image of the Image Maker....", 265.

36 S. H. Griffith, "The Image of the Image Maker....", 261.

37 St. Ephrem, Hymns on Nativity 8:2.

38 W. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, (London; 1989), 152.

39 ; Quenot, *The Icon...*, 65.

The symbolic language of iconography completely eludes the sensual person.⁴⁰ Iconography was not at all devised by painters, but on the contrary, it is an accepted institution and tradition of the catholic church.⁴¹

The sacred art of the chief world traditions have their own unique rules and stipulations. For christians it is the human face of Jesus the saviour that is the principal image. Christian art has a mission to help reconstruct both humanity and the world which depend on it. Sacred art is not a burlesque or caricature, not a photography, but a life expression. To debase the human face and figure is to ridicule and to deride God who created them. Icons are traditionally and canonically instituted things.⁴² The act of writing an icon was regarded as a godly work that needs preparation, not only by schooling the craft skills required, but by prayer and penitence.⁴³

A strictly intellectual icon is a deviation from the holy tradition. Only the specialized aspect of the work relies on the painter. Its layout, its qualities, its construction depend conclusively on the holy Fathers. Hence the writings of the ancient Fathers and the venerable traditions of the primitive church are the matrixes from which the icons have

emerged. This is actually the ecclesial foundation of the icons. Icons are the best means of the transmission of the catholic faith. The faith is that of the Church. This relies in the faith traditions of a particular church. Icons belong to an organic part of christian theology and it is also known as visual theology.⁴⁴ It has a philosophy and a rich symbolism behind it. "It developed freely in the Platonist ethos of the eastern fathers with their philosophy of transcendence, since this philosophy implies symbolism".⁴⁵

Theokretov says:

"The raison d'être of icons is to serve God as well as humanity. The icon is a window through which the people of God, the Church, can contemplate the kingdom, and for this reason each line, each colour, each feature of the icon has a meaning. The iconographic canon established over the centuries is not a prison depriving the artist of creativity, rather it is a defender and a protection of that authenticity-orthodox-of what is represented. And that is precisely what iconographic tradition is all about. When we paint St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John Chrysostom, St. Seraphim and all the other saints, we want to be sure to paint them according to Church tradition, just as the church

40 M. Quenot, *The Icon...*, 66.

41 Ivan Moody, "Icons in Music? Two Works by Tavener", *Sobornost* 10 (1988), 34.

42 M. Quenot, *The Icon...* 66.

43 J. Goodall, *Icons and Spirituality: An Essay in Interpretation*, *One in Christ*, 9(1973), 284.

44 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", *One in Christ*, 3(1967), 165.

45 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 165.

knows and preserves them in her memory".⁴⁶ Theology is possible and becomes meaningful only within the communion of the church, on the infrastructure of the church, and in dependence on the norm of the church's living tradition. Theology is the reflected memory of the church. For properly understood, being tied to the church does not mean being tied to a conceptual system of doctrine. It means being woven into a living process of tradition and communication in which the one Gospel of Jesus Christ is interpreted and effected.⁴⁷

Tradition is the way of the church. It is the way the church takes. Icons are not mere objects in the church but authentic expressions of ecclesial tradition. They bring out the original ecclesial consciousness.

An icon is depicted according to a tradition and documents which are not the artists' belongings. The inspiration must come from the Holy Spirit, not from the artist. Icon painting therefore is an art and an apostolate. It is actually a mission apostolate. It is a kind of evangelization. From the icons the west gradually moved to sculptures, pictures and statues.⁴⁸ The art of iconography was shaped and developed by the nature of the faith it served. Hence its strong ecclesiological foundation. For the church

this spiritual premise was basic, whereas the icons' aesthetic and artistic value is secondary.⁴⁹

Holy Virgin, saints and Martyrs etc. have a real iconic function when we consider the ecclesial patrimony. In the apostolic letter *Orientalium Lumen* Pope John Paul says: "On the path of divinization, those who have been made most Christ like by grace and by commitment to the way of goodness go before us: the martyrs and saints. And the Virgin Mary occupies an altogether special place among them. From her the shoot of Jesse sprang. Her figure is not only the Mother who waits for us, but the most pure, who-the fulfilment of so many Old Testament prefigurations-is an icon of the Church, the symbol and anticipation of humanity transfigured by grace...."⁵⁰

In the secular art the original work and its significance reflect the personality of the artist. It is something like the taking shape of his thought and foresight of the world. It is a matter of public acceptance. The iconographer develops his art both from tradition and from the teachings of the church. His personality must efface itself before the personality illustrated in the icon. The viewpoint is that of the Baptist, he must become greater and I must become

46 From M. Quenot, *The Icon...*, 70.

47 W. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, London, 1989, 7.

48 M. Quenot, *The Icon...*, 72.

49 Aristides Papadakis, *The Theological Premise...*, 49.

50 Pope John Paul II, *Orientalium Lumen* (Apostolic Letter) (Vatican City; 1995), number 6.

smaller. As a logical aftermath an iconographer should not sign icons for at least these reasons. The name is synonymous with the personality, which should discretely disappear "The icon may be a beautiful art form, but for the church it is primarily a sacred, a consecrated thing. This is why the church still desires to supervise both the icon painter and his methods, and insists that he must be a baptized".⁵¹ Some Icons express very high ascetical motives, especially of the Russian origin, which is also a foundational trait of eastern ecclesiology.⁵²

3 The Function of a Theologian and Role of an Iconographer are Identical

First of all there is a intimate relation between Gospel narratives and icons. Both have their basis in the incarnation of Christ and they presuppose each other and are mutually revelatory.⁵³

The theological writer and the iconographer are engaged in the same task, the propagation of faith, only that they work in different media. Dogma is a logical icon of divine reality.⁵⁴ The Fathers of the church have done an iconic function. A theologian in that sense is an iconographer. He is talented and trained in the application of concepts just as an icon writer or painter is gifted in his field of art. "In the visual representation of the icon, the narrative

of the Gospel, the pictorial language of liturgical poetry and the conceptualization of the dogma, the Church is expressing the same things in different ways".⁵⁵ The same God is both truth and beauty.

Church is the custodian of faith. The church communicates her faith in God through diverse means. Iconography is one of the best means of transmitting that faith. The role of both the church and icon is analogous and identical. The faith transmission is the principal concern of any standard icon. The use of icons by christians is very ancient. Christianity and icons have progressed together.⁵⁶ Icons in houses or in the churches are not intended for show but for prayer before them, for reverence, for instruction.

That which the word conveys by sound, the painting explains quietly by depiction. This is the theological position of the icon in the eastern Church as clarified at Nicaea II. Protecting the iconographic heritage against the iconoclasts, the seventh ecumenical council said that the language of the sacred art is a language which parallels the sacred writings. It is not simply a matter of art representing the word of scripture. It is clear from such propositions that the icon is an indispensable part of

51 Aristeides Papadakis, *The Theological Premise...*, 49.

52 E. N. Trubetskoi, *Icons: Theology in Colour* (New York: 1973), 25.

53 E. F. Harrison, "Word as Icon in Greek Patristic Theology", in *Sobornost* 10 (1988), 38.

54 G. Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, (Belmont: 1976), 29.

55 Harrison, "Word as Icon...", 39.

56 J. Goodall, "Icons and Spirituality...", 289.

eastern worship, in the same way that scripture is made a foundation of faith by virtue of being construed a living representation. Icons are more than their physical reality.⁵⁷

A visible expression of the invisible, the icon does not exist by itself, since it is a means to lead us to others: Christ, the trinity, the theotokos and the saints. For the easterners an icon is a true sacrament of a personal presence. "What the gospel proclaims to us by words, the icon also proclaims and renders present for us by colour".⁵⁸ East and west have different consciousness regarding the icons and their veneration. The art of the eastern churches devoted itself to solemnizing the glory of God, the dignity of Christ victorious, over suffering and death, while western church remained attached to the foot of the cross. Some of the western art demolishes the divine aspect involved at the crucifixion. In such religious art, the humanity of Christ outshines his divinity, without any evidence of a victory, or resurrection thus denying the holy cross its genuine strength of life.

4 Icon: An Image which Purifies

An icon is the image of the world purified, transformed, rendered present by a genuine spirituality. The icon of Christ,

the image not made by hands is the standard model for every other depiction of the human face.⁵⁹ This face of "God became man" purifies the face of all humanity. Therefore, whoever resists to admit a reflection of the divine face in the face of another human being becomes an iconoclast. So the christian artist must rediscover the human face.⁶⁰ "Real Symbol is a sign which is not simply conventional or extrinsic like the flag as the designation of the fatherland, nor simply natural like smoke as a sign of fire, but a sign with a spiritually organic link to the object signified, like a sacrament as a sign of the grace which it not only denotes but also renders present".⁶¹

5. Icon, the Prolonging of Incarnation

The basic element involved in the veneration of icons is our witnessing to the incarnation. Christ is the icon of the Father. This is a capital theme in eastern theology.⁶² The icon of Christ participates in the person of the model, thus perpetuating his incarnation (not in the literal sense). According to Ouspensky, the icon is a perceivable testimony of both the meekness of God towards humanity as well as of the elan or stimulus of humanity towards God. It is the visible confirmation of the implanting

57 Ivan Moody, "Icons in Music...", 34.

58 M. Quenot, *The Icon...*, 79.

59 E.F. Harrison, "Word as Icon in Greek Patristic Theology", *Sobornost* 10 (1988) 38-49.

60 M. Quenot, *The Icon...*, 147.

61 E. G. Farrugia, "The Eastern Vision: The Rise of Modern Eastern Theology", *ETJ* 1 (1917), 8.

62 P. C. Schonborn op. *Die Christus-Ikone*, (Berlin: 1984), 55 ff.

of created humanity into the divine uncreated Being. The whole economy of salvation is based on the mystery of incarnation. To forget it would provoke a speedy breakdown of the church and its faith. "An [icon is entirely based on the incarnation of the Word of God, the supreme justification of the cult of images is derived from its foundation on the incarnation. An icon for John Damascus was a concrete manifestation, a showing forth of the cardinal doctrine of christianity, an expression of the truth that God became man. To deny a pictorial representation of Christ was tantamount to denying his incarnation, his taking flesh".⁶³ About the relation between an icon and incarnation we could say that one implies the other. Jesus Christ is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4ff, Col. 1:12ff, Heb. 1:3) because as the son of God he portrays the Father and as the incarnate God, he makes God visible. Thus the splendour of the Father's glory lies in him.⁶⁴ The incarnation originates from God's desire to become man, and because of the love of men—philanthropy—and to make his humanity into a theophany, the icon of his presence.⁶⁵

The icon is different as to nature but alike as to the person. The icon carries us to the closeness of the whole

Christ and makes us contemplate the mystery of incarnation. To say that the icon depicts the two natures at once is to step into monophysitism, by confusing the divine and the human, and to say that it only represents the human nature is to be culpable of holding nestorianism, which separates the two natures. It is not a question of nature seeing nature, but of person contemplating person.⁶⁶ The honour given to the icon goes to its prototype.⁶⁷ An icon is an actual ephiphany. Just as with the name God in the Bible that which is elicited becomes manifest.⁶⁸

The theological justification for iconoclasm was basically that images were idols and that any representation of Christ in particular divided his humanity from his divinity.⁶⁹ The fundamental justification for the veneration of images is that all matter had been ennobled by the incarnation and was worthy of bearing representation of the holy and even of the divine. St John of Damascus wrote three treatises in response to the iconoclastic heresy of the eighth century, which violently rejected Christian veneration of images. He reminds the faithful that the use of images is a necessary safeguard of the central doctrine of the christian faith, the Incarnation.⁷⁰

63 Aristeides Papadakis, *The Theological Premise...*, 53.

64 K. Rahner, H. Vorgrimler, *Dictionary of Theology*, (New York: 1981), 228.

65 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 173-4:

66 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 174.

67 St. John Damascene, PG 94, 1256.

68 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 165.

69 J. Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 502.

70 Cf. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images* (New York: 1980), esp. from page 68 following.

6 Icon and Liturgy

In the east the icons are integrated into the liturgical mystery. The very setting of the church itself is symbolic and iconic. The priest celebrating behind the iconostasis indicates the hidden mystery of God.⁷¹ The architectural models of a temple, the frescoes, icons and objects of worship are not simply put together like articles in a museum. Instead as the members of a body, they live the same mystery life and are consolidated into the liturgical mystery.⁷² It is a vital point for it is almost impossible to understand an icon apart from this integration. "Through the liturgical function the icon consecrates the profane, transforming a neutral dwelling place into a domestic Church, and the life of the faithful into a prayer life of interior and unceasing liturgy".⁷³ The eastern heritage is actually marked by the presence of icons; "The framework of belief and worship to which the icon belongs is the Christian liturgy. The art of the icon is a liturgical art. It is a visual system conveying and giving support to the spiritual facts, which underlies the whole liturgical drama".⁷⁴ Theology in the textual character is replaced by that in the cultic character. In the liturgy the mysteries of salvation

through Christ are depicted. The same mysteries are also depicted in the icons. There is a spiritual union between liturgy and art.⁷⁵ Liturgical celebration is an icon of the Church.⁷⁶

Icon is not a piece of decoration but a part of the liturgy. Outside the context of prayer it ceases to be an icon and becomes a picture of a religious tradition. In the context of prayer it is not just a visual aid but fulfils a sacramental function, constituting a channel of divine grace. Viewed in this way the icon acts as a point of meeting, a place of encounter, the icon is named a door.⁷⁷

7 Icon and Theology of Transfiguration

Transfiguration is at the heart of the icon. It is the cornerstone of the eastern doctrines concerning the vision of God. Icon is certainly a vision of God made man and of his deifying grace displayed in men. It is the prototype, not just the portrait of our future transfigured humanity. The transfiguration that awaits all humanity is contained in the transfiguration at tabor. "Then he was transfigured before them: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as light" (Mt 17:2). We are personally invited to share in this transfiguration.

71 Y. Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, (London; 1982), 72.

72 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 171.

73 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 171.

74 A. M. Allchin, (ed) *Sacrament and Image* (London 1983), 58.

75 M. Vaidyan, *The Icon and its Theology*, 42,

76 *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (Vatican City: 1996), 29.

77 Kallistos Ware, "The Spirituality of the Icons", in *The Study of Spirituality*, (London: 1986), 197.

Icon is part of the transfigured cosmos. "The role of the icon, whose world-wide fascination is itself an index of the revival of eastern theology, is to irradiate a message of transfiguration on all levels: of love, of culture and of thought, all of them gravitating towards the meaning of real symbol".⁷⁸ By virtue of the icon the worshipper enters the dimensions of sacred time and space, and so is brought into a living, effective contact with the person or mystery described. The icon serves not as a mere reminder only but as a means of communion. The church walls (with icons) become windows into eternity.⁷⁹ The whole church is one great icon. It is heaven on earth. In the eastern families there is an icon room where prayers are said. Art brings about the transfiguration of the world, and renders it comfortable to its true image.⁸⁰

8 Presence and Encounter

According to Gregory the Great icons are for the unlettered what the sacred scriptures are for the instructed.⁸¹ Icon has a pastoral and pedagogical value. It is above all a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit in the person represented. Hence a spiritual value also. For the east, icons form one of the

sacramentals of presence, and the rite of consecration confers upon them a miraculous character so that they become channels of grace.⁸² The seventh Council says: Whether by contemplation of Holy Scripture or by the representation of an icon...we remind ourselves of all the prototypes and we are brought near to them. And the Council of 860 says: that which the book tells us in words, the icon announces to us in colour and makes it present to us.⁸³ An icon has no distinctive reality of its own. This is precisely because it draws the whole of its theophanic value from its participation in the wholly other that it cannot contain anything in itself, but becomes a schematic point from which the presence radiates.⁸⁴ It is this liturgical theology of presence which clearly distinguishes the icon from a picture.

9 Icon and Idolatry

There is a substantial difference between icons and idols. The word icon excludes any identification and shows the essential difference between the image and its prototype. It is impossible to say: The icon of Christ is Christ, though the icon witnesses to and expresses his presence.⁸⁵ Its role is clear. It is intended for prayerful communion, and makes

78 E. G. Farrugia s. j., "The Eastern Vision: The Rise of Modern Eastern Theology", ETJ 1(1997), 8.

79 K. Ware, "The Spirituality of the Icon", 197

80 E. L. Mascall (ed), *The Church of God* (London: 1934), 176-7.

81 PL 77, 1027.

82 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 171.

83 Mansi, xiii, 482.

84 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 172.

85 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 174.

possible encounter in prayer, of which the milieu is not localized in the icon as a material object, but through and by means of the icon as a vehicle of the radiating presence. Icons transmit the faith of the Church. The milieu of the presence is not the piece of wood but the likeness it evokes. The icon as participation and guiding image leads to the prototype, whose presence in no way uses the icon so as to be incarnated in it, but instead finds therein a centre from which its energy may radiate. The presence of the icons is a circle whose centre is in every icon, but whose circumference is nowhere. The icon is a point at which the transcendent breaks through with its irresistible waves of presence.⁸⁶ To consider and treat an icon like an idol, to adore it as enjoying a substantial identity with the nature [of what it represents, is to demolish it. To enclose a presence in a piece of wood is to turn it into an idol which makes absent the person represented and robs the icon of its being.⁸⁷

The icon gives out a strong call: be one as I and the Father are one. Man is the image of the trinitarian

God, and the Church communion provides the deepest truth of his being.⁸⁸ In the eastern christian tradition, there exists two ways of praying. The one -iconic and the other non-iconic. There is first on both the corporate and private level, the way of cataphatic prayer, making full use of the imagination, of poetry and music, of symbols and ritual gestures, and in this way of praying the holy icons have an essential place. Secondly there is the way of apophatic or hesychastic prayer, transcending images and expressed also in the practice of Jesus prayer. These two ways are not alternatives, still less are they mutually exclusive, but each deepens and completes the other.⁸⁹

This article-east as the homeland of iconology and iconography was an attempt at analysing and consolidating the highlights of the theology of icons, especially in an ecclesiological perspective. Our main concern was to situate the icons in the context of the mystery of the Church and liturgy. We have come to the conclusion that the icons constitute an integral part of the eastern christian tradition.

Joseph Kallarangatt

86 P. Evdokimov, "The Meaning of Icons", 174.

87 P. " " 175.

88 " " "Interpretation of Rublev's Icon of the Trinity", *One in Christ* 3(1967), 309-310.

89 K. Ware, "The Spirituality of the Icons," 198.

Book Reviews

Chako Aerath O. I. C., Liturgy and Ethos. A Study based on the Malankara Liturgy of Marriage, Marthoma Yogam, Rome 1995, Price not given.

This book is the doctoral dissertation in Moral Theology defended on 1st December 1994 at Academia Alfonsiana, Rome. It is a theological reflection on the spirituality and moral life of the Malankara family life based on their liturgy.

The first part of this book having two chapters is a theoretical study on the relationship between liturgy and ethos. The first chapter is an enquiry into ethos and ethics. The second chapter sees liturgy as the celebration of the ethos of the people of God. Liturgy is viewed as postfigurative, prefigurative and configurative ethos. Postfigurative ethos refers to the fruit of redemption offered to the individual Christian in and through the liturgical celebration. It shows how the ethos of a society is taken over to its liturgy and is given new meaning. Prefigurative ethos refers to the fullness that is expected at the end of time. Configurative ethos means that the ethos celebrated in the liturgy guides the present life of the Christian.

The second part of this book deals with the ethical meaning of the Malankara liturgy of marriage. Its first chapter demonstrates how the liturgy of marriage brings forward a postfigurative form of conjugal ethos. The second chapter shows how the ultimate ethos is prefigured here and now. The third chapter deals with the configurative function of liturgy.

The book ends with a general conclusion, two appendices and a rich bibliography. This book is a rich contribution to the theology of the Malankara Catholic Church.

Dr. Thomas Mannooranparampil

EPHREM'S Theological Journal

Published from St. Ephrem's Theological College. P. B. No. 26, Satna, 485 001. M. P. India. Annual Subscription: Rs. 50.00 (India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan); Rs. 100.00 (Sri Lanka: All other countries (Air mails) US \$ 15.00)

As it is quite evident from the title itself it is a theological Journal which opens up the horizons of the eastern world. Pope John Paul II has been repeatedly reminding the Catholic world "to begin to learn to breathe again with its two lungs, the eastern and the western".

The Catholic Church is not a monolithic organization but the communion of Churches united in the same faith, same sacraments, and hierarchical communion. Unity in faith does not mean the same theological position. Unity in sacraments does not mean the same kind of sacramental celebration and the hierarchical communion does not mean the same form of ecclesiastical administration and juridical set up. These Churches are different in their theology, discipline, liturgy, spirituality, traditions, administrative system etc. Theology is the interpretation of the faith, discipline the principles followed for maintaining the spirit of harmony in the community and liturgy is the celebration of the faith of a Church. Unity is different from uniformity. The different churches, both eastern and western, manifest the rich diversity of the Catholic Church.

Because of the various vicissitudes of history the Western Church expanded to the Americas and the Afro-Asian world mainly during the periods of crusades and colonial conquests. The missionaries followed the flag of the colonial powers. In India too we come across the same. There was only Eastern Christianity until the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498. From 1599 up to 1896 the Latin missionaries ruled over the Eastern Church of the Thomas Christians. Finally after almost three centuries of struggle they succeeded to get indigenous bishops of their own Church. But the theology, spirituality, discipline, liturgy, etc. of the Latin Church still continue, to prevail over this Church. On the other hand the catholic Church wants her entire heritage. Ephrem's Theological Journal is a most welcome initiative for achieving this goal.

The Editors have succeeded to get articles from important scholars in India and abroad. The topics dealt with are relevant in Eastern Theology. We congratulate H. E. Mar Abraham, the bishop of Satna and the Editorial Board for this great achievement. It is beautifully printed.

As a sister publication with the same goal Christian orient wishes every success.

Dr. Xavier Koodapuzha

Gennadios Limouris (ed), *Church, Kingdom and World. The Church as mystery and Prophetic sign*. Faith and Order Paper No. 130. World Council of Churches. Geneva 1986.

The Assembly of the WCC held at Vancouver in 1983 welcomed the proposal of Faith and Order Commission to make a study on the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community. It suggested that this study should have a clear ecclesiological focus emphasising the concept of the Church as sign. Such a study was made by the standing commission on the Faith and Order in terms of

'the Church as Mystery and Prophetic sign'. The first consultation of the Faith and Order Commission basing on this theme was held at Chantilly, near Paris from 3 to 10 January 1985. This book brings together the papers and responses given at Chantilly and the first draft of its report.

Eminent theologians presented the following papers. The Church as sacrament, Sign and instrument, The Church as Mystery and Sign in Relation to the Holy Trinity. The Mystery of the Church, Church and World in the Light of the Kingdom of God. The Church as Eucharistic Community and the Renewal of Human community, The Church as a Sacramental Vision and the challenge of Christian Witness, The Church as a prophetic Sign. This book is enriched with a preface and six appendices also. It contains a very deep theology of the Church, especially in an ecumenical perspective.

Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil

Schule des Herzensgebetes, Die Weisheit des Starz Theophan, Otto Müller Verlag, Salzburg 1985.

This book was originally published by Chariton in Russian in 1936. Its English translation appeared in 1966 under the title *The Art of Prayer. An Orthodox Anthology*. Sr. Fides Buchheim prepared the German translation from its French translation.

The book contains six chapters. The first chapter explains what prayer is. The second chapter is about Jesus prayer. The third chapter deals with the fruits of prayer. The realm of heart is the object of the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter speaks about the invisible spiritual fight against the forces of evil. The last chapter points out the necessity of humility and love in spiritual life. The book has also a Forward by Josef Rafael Kleiner, an introduction by Josef Sudbreak S. J. and a good glossary.

Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil

PAUL PALLAT, *Local Bodies in East and West*, ISBN 81 - 86063 - 1 (OIRSI, No. 198), KOTTAYAM, 1997, Pages 574, Price, Rs. 200/- abroad 15.00 \$ US. For Copies: Director, OIRSI, P. B. N. 10, Vadavathoor P. O., Kottayam 686 010, Kerala, India.

It is a well documented work on the historical background as well as the administrative structures addjuridical set up of the various local episcopal bodies enumerated in the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (CCEO) and Codex Juris Canonici (CIC).

The various administrative bodies came into existence as means of effective pastoral ministry. In course of time they assumed juridical character drawing inspiration also from the secular systems of the civil society. In this context the influence

of the Roman Law has been decisive on the Churches within the Roman Empire. Even the basic administrative structures such as dioceses, Provinces etc. were borrowed from the pagan Roman Empire. On the other hand ecclesiology explains to us the true nature and mission of the Church. Hence ecclesiology should have precedence over its juridical set up and the juridical structures of the Church should be viewed as shells to protect the kernel which ecclesiology maintains. If the kernel is not the focus the juridical set up will deteriorate as an empty shell devoid of its true content!

This book of Dr. Paul Pallath is also ecumenically opportune because of the new understanding of the nature of the Catholic Church as the communion of Churches. It begins with a brief and clear analysis on how the Church was administered through out the first millennium of its history. It proceeds to analyze the various administrative bodies of the Church. Unity of the Church did not mean uniformity. It was not a highly centralized monolithic organization of a monarchical pattern. On the contrary, all the normal administration was carried out at the local level. The election of bishops, the settlement of inter-diocesan problems, legislations for the good of the local Church, founding of the monasteries and Religious Orders and their discipline etc. were within the competence and responsibility of the different individual Churches. This study could be a background for understanding and appreciating the unique ecclesiastical set up of the Church of the Thomas Christians of India which had its origin and growth outside the Graeco-Roman world. This book of Paul Pallath is indeed a real contribution to understand the juridical set up of the Eastern and Western Churches.

Dr. Xavier Koodapuzha

News

Holy Father visited Cuba

His Holiness Pope John Paul II made a historic visit to the Communist Cuba. The visit took place in January 1998 and was historic because it was for the first time that a Pope was paying a visit to the communist country of Cuba. The President of Cuba Fidel Castro gave a very warm welcome to the Pope. Observers attach much importance to this visit. The political change in Poland was the result of the Pope's visit to that country. Political analysts expect some sort of liberalization in Cuba. The Pope did not hesitate to demand the Cuban government to give religious freedom to the citizens and the USA to lift the embargo imposed on it. As a result, in the month of March USA has shown some positive gestures to Cuba.

Mar Antony Cardinal Padiyara honoured

Mar Antony Padiyara, the former Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church has been awarded the civil honour of Padmasree by the government of India. It is for the first time that an ecclesiastical dignitary is given such a civil honour.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Chakiath auxiliary Bishop

Rev. Dr. Thomas Chakiath has been appointed by the Holy Father as the auxiliary bishop of Ernakulam Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Major Archepiscopal Church. The new bishop has been the Vicar General of the same Archdiocese since 1997. Until then he was teaching at the Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Aluva, Kerala. He will be consecrated on April 14, 1998.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Viruthukulangara appointed as Archbishop of Nagpur

His Excellency Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Viruthukulangara, the bishop of Khanduva, North India has been promoted as Archbishop of Nagpur. He became bishop in 1977 at the age of 34. He hails from the Syro-Malabar diocese of Kottayam, Kerala, India.

Rev. Fr. Jose Mukala, bishop of Kohima

Rev. Fr. Jose Mukala was appointed as the bishop of Kohima by His Holiness Pope John II on 9th December 1997 and was consecrated on 15th March 1998. He hails from the Syro-Malabar diocese of Palai, Kerala, India.

Fr. Balasurya reconciled with the Church

Fr. Balasurya, the controversial theologian of Sri Lanka, punished by Vatican for his unorthodox writings has been reconciled with the Church. He has publicly acknowledged his mistakes and has agreed to correct the controversial expressions in his writings.

Dr. George Thomas Kallunkal elected as Superior General

The 16th General Synaxis of the Congregation of the Order of the Imitation of Christ held in 18th February 1998 has elected Very Rev. Fr. George Thomas Kallunkal OIC as the Superior General of this Congregation. The Same Synaxis has also elected Rev. Fr. Jerome Peedikaparampil OIC - 1st Councillor, Rev. Fr. Sebastian Kuttickattu OIC - 2nd Councillor, Rev. Fr. Antony Valiyavilayil OIC - 3rd Councillor, Rev. Fr. Chrysostom Kulathintemelethil OIC - Procurator General, Rev. Fr. Sylvester Kanjiramukalil OIC - Secretary General.

FORM OF DECLARATION

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) Place of publication | 580/XIV, Manganam, Kottayam-18 |
| 2) Periodicity of Publication | Quarterly |
| 3) Printer's name Nationality
and address | Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil
Indian, 288/XIII, P. B. 1, Kottayam
686 010 |
| 4) Publisher's name, Nationality
and address | Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil
Indian, 288/XIII, P. B. 1, Kottayam
686 010 |
| 5) Editor's name, Nationality
and address | Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil
Indian, 288/XIII, P. B. 1, Kottayam
686 010 |
| 6) Owner's name | Christian Orient Trust, 580/XIV
Manganam, Kottayam 686 018 |

I hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd/-

Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil
Publisher

1-3-1998

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